

## (12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization  
International Bureau

(43) International Publication Date  
18 January 2001 (18.01.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number  
**WO 01/04938 A1**(51) International Patent Classification: H01L 21/027,  
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(21) International Application Number: PCT/SG99/00074

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(22) International Filing Date: 9 July 1999 (09.07.1999)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

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(81) Designated States (national): AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

(84) Designated States (regional): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

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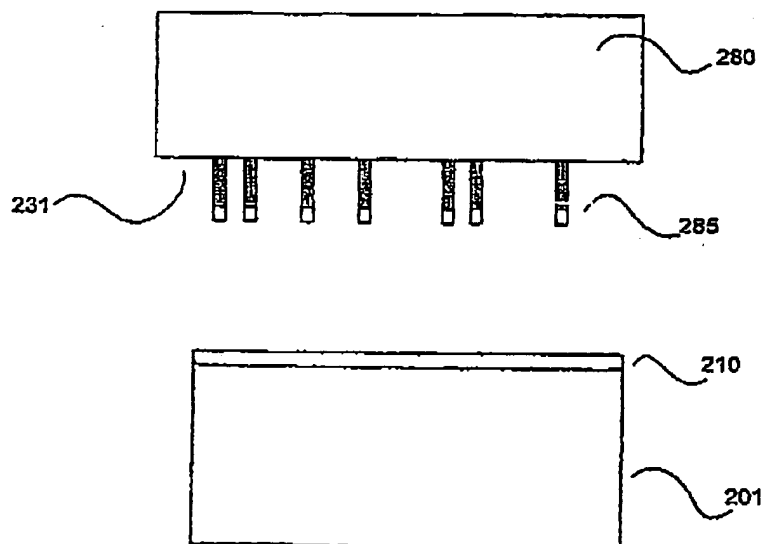
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Published:

— With international search report.

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: MECHANICAL PATTERNING OF A DEVICE LAYER



(57) Abstract: A method of fabricating a device comprising mechanically patterning a device layer using a stamp containing the desired pattern. The device layer is formed on a plastic or polymeric substrate. The stamp is pressed against the substrate under a load which patterns the device layer without cracking it in the non-patterned areas.

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1. REASONING 2. ARITHMETIC 3. ALGEBRA 4. GEOMETRY 5. TRIGONOMETRY 6. STATISTICS 7. PSYCHOLOGY 8. PHYSICS 9. CHEMISTRY 10. BIOLOGY 11. HISTORY 12. LITERATURE 13. LANGUAGE 14. SCIENCE 15. TECHNOLOGY 16. ARTS 17. SPORTS 18. ENTERTAINMENT 19. RELIGION 20. PHILOSOPHY 21. ETHICS 22. LOGIC 23. CRITICAL THINKING 24. PROBLEM SOLVING 25. CREATIVITY 26. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 27. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 28. LEADERSHIP 29. TEAMWORK 30. COMMUNICATION 31. WRITING 32. READING 33. LISTENING 34. SPKING 35. GRAMMAR 36. VOCABULARY 37. SPELLING 38. NUMERACY 39. PROBLEM SOLVING 40. CRITICAL THINKING 41. CREATIVITY 42. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 43. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 44. LEADERSHIP 45. TEAMWORK 46. COMMUNICATION 47. WRITING 48. READING 49. LISTENING 50. SPKING 51. GRAMMAR 52. VOCABULARY 53. SPELLING 54. NUMERACY 55. PROBLEM SOLVING 56. CRITICAL THINKING 57. CREATIVITY 58. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 59. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 60. LEADERSHIP 61. TEAMWORK 62. COMMUNICATION 63. WRITING 64. READING 65. LISTENING 66. SPKING 67. GRAMMAR 68. VOCABULARY 69. SPELLING 70. NUMERACY 71. PROBLEM SOLVING 72. CRITICAL THINKING 73. CREATIVITY 74. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 75. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 76. LEADERSHIP 77. TEAMWORK 78. COMMUNICATION 79. WRITING 80. READING 81. LISTENING 82. SPKING 83. GRAMMAR 84. VOCABULARY 85. SPELLING 86. NUMERACY 87. PROBLEM SOLVING 88. CRITICAL THINKING 89. CREATIVITY 90. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 91. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 92. LEADERSHIP 93. TEAMWORK 94. COMMUNICATION 95. WRITING 96. READING 97. LISTENING 98. SPKING 99. GRAMMAR 100. VOCABULARY 101. SPELLING 102. NUMERACY 103. PROBLEM SOLVING 104. CRITICAL THINKING 105. CREATIVITY 106. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 107. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 108. LEADERSHIP 109. TEAMWORK 110. COMMUNICATION 111. WRITING 112. READING 113. LISTENING 114. SPKING 115. GRAMMAR 116. VOCABULARY 117. SPELLING 118. NUMERACY 119. PROBLEM SOLVING 120. CRITICAL THINKING 121. CREATIVITY 122. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 123. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 124. LEADERSHIP 125. TEAMWORK 126. COMMUNICATION 127. WRITING 128. READING 129. LISTENING 130. SPKING 131. GRAMMAR 132. VOCABULARY 133. SPELLING 134. NUMERACY 135. PROBLEM SOLVING 136. CRITICAL THINKING 137. CREATIVITY 138. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 139. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 140. LEADERSHIP 141. TEAMWORK 142. COMMUNICATION 143. WRITING 144. READING 145. LISTENING 146. SPKING 147. GRAMMAR 148. VOCABULARY 149. SPELLING 150. NUMERACY 151. PROBLEM SOLVING 152. CRITICAL THINKING 153. CREATIVITY 154. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 155. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 156. LEADERSHIP 157. TEAMWORK 158. COMMUNICATION 159. WRITING 160. READING 161. LISTENING 162. SPKING 163. GRAMMAR 164. VOCABULARY 165. SPELLING 166. NUMERACY 167. PROBLEM SOLVING 168. CRITICAL THINKING 169. CREATIVITY 170. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 171. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 172. LEADERSHIP 173. TEAMWORK 174. COMMUNICATION 175. WRITING 176. READING 177. LISTENING 178. SPKING 179. GRAMMAR 180. VOCABULARY 181. SPELLING 182. NUMERACY 183. PROBLEM SOLVING 184. CRITICAL THINKING 185. CREATIVITY 186. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 187. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 188. LEADERSHIP 189. TEAMWORK 190. COMMUNICATION 191. WRITING 192. READING 193. LISTENING 194. SPKING 195. GRAMMAR 196. VOCABULARY 197. SPELLING 198. NUMERACY 199. PROBLEM SOLVING 200. CRITICAL THINKING 201. CREATIVITY 202. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 203. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 204. LEADERSHIP 205. TEAMWORK 206. COMMUNICATION 207. WRITING 208. READING 209. LISTENING 210. SPKING 211. GRAMMAR 212. VOCABULARY 213. SPELLING 214. NUMERACY 215. PROBLEM SOLVING 216. CRITICAL THINKING 217. CREATIVITY 218. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 219. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 220. LEADERSHIP 221. TEAMWORK 222. COMMUNICATION 223. WRITING 224. READING 225. LISTENING 226. SPKING 227. GRAMMAR 228. VOCABULARY 229. SPELLING 230. NUMERACY 231. PROBLEM SOLVING 232. CRITICAL THINKING 233. CREATIVITY 234. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 235. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 236. LEADERSHIP 237. TEAMWORK 238. COMMUNICATION 239. WRITING 240. READING 241. LISTENING 242. SPKING 243. GRAMMAR 244. VOCABULARY 245. SPELLING 246. NUMERACY 247. PROBLEM SOLVING 248. CRITICAL THINKING 249. CREATIVITY 250. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 251. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 252. LEADERSHIP 253. TEAMWORK 254. COMMUNICATION 255. WRITING 256. READING 257. LISTENING 258. SPKING 259. GRAMMAR 260. VOCABULARY 261. SPELLING 262. NUMERACY 263. PROBLEM SOLVING 264. CRITICAL THINKING 265. CREATIVITY 266. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 267. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 268. LEADERSHIP 269. TEAMWORK 270. COMMUNICATION 271. WRITING 272. READING 273. LISTENING 274. SPKING 275. GRAMMAR 276. VOCABULARY 277. SPELLING 278. NUMERACY 279. PROBLEM SOLVING 280. CRITICAL THINKING 281. CREATIVITY 282. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 283. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS 284. LEADERSHIP 285. TEAMWORK 286. COMMUNICATION 287. WRITING 288. READING 289. LISTENING 290. SPKING 291. GRAMMAR 292. VOCABULARY 293. SPELLING 294. NUMERACY 295.

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**MECHANICAL PATTERNING OF A DEVICE LAYER****Field of the Invention**

The present invention relates to the fabrication of  
5 devices. More particularly, the invention relates to  
patterning of a device layer on a substrate.

**Background of the Invention**

In device fabrication, one or more device layers  
10 are formed on a substrate. The layers are sequentially  
deposited and patterned to create features on the  
surface of the substrate. The layers can be patterned  
individually and/or as a combination of layers to form  
the desired features. The features serve as components  
15 that perform the desired functions, creating the device.

One type of device which is of particular interest  
is a light emitting diode (LED). Typically, an LED cell  
or pixel comprises one or more functional layers  
sandwiched between two electrodes to form a functional  
20 stack. Charge carriers are injected from both  
electrodes. These charge carriers recombine in the  
functional layer or layers, causing visible radiation to  
emit. Recently, significant advances have been made  
utilizing organic functional layers to form organic LEDs

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(OLEDs). Such devices are fabricated on rigid glass substrates having a thickness of about 0.3-1.1 mm.

Typically, OLED devices comprises a plurality of OLED pixels arranged to form a display, such as a flat panel display (FPD). A pixelated OLED device includes, for example, a plurality of first electrode strips formed on the substrate. The strips are arranged in a first direction. One or more organic layers are formed on the first electrodes strips. A plurality of second electrode strips is formed over the organic layers in a second direction. Typically, the first and second electrode strips are orthogonal to each other. The intersections of the first and second electrode strips form LED pixels.

The first electrode strips are created on the substrate by patterning an electrode layer. Conventionally, the electrode layer is patterned by photolithographic and etch processes. For example, a photosensitive resist layer is deposited on the electrode. The resist layer is exposed with radiation having the desired pattern defined by a mask. After development, unwanted resist is removed to expose portions of the electrode beneath. The exposed portions are removed by a wet etch, leaving the desired pattern

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on the electrode layer. Thus, conventional techniques for patterning the electrode require numerous steps, increasing raw process time and manufacturing cost.

As evidenced by the above discussion, it is  
5 desirable to provide a simplified process of patterning a device layer.

#### Summary of the Invention

The invention relates to patterning a device layer  
10 on a substrate during device fabrication. In accordance with the invention, the patterning of the device layer is achieved using a stamp with a pattern thereon. The pattern is formed by protrusions having a height greater than the thickness of the device layer to pattern the  
15 device layer. The stamp is pressed against the surface of the substrate under a load which patterns the device layer. The load is selected to precisely control cracking the edges of the patterned areas but without cracking the non-patterned areas.

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#### Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 shows an organic pixel LED;

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Figs. 2-4 show a process for patterning a device layer in accordance with one embodiment of the invention; and

Fig. 5 shows an alternative process for patterning a device layer.

#### Preferred Embodiments of the Invention

The invention relates generally to the fabrication of devices. In particular, the invention describes a process for patterning a device layer on a substrate, particularly a device layer formed on a ductile or flexible substrate. Various types of devices can be formed by the present invention. For example, electrical, mechanical, or electromechanical devices can be formed. Also, the invention can be useful in fabricating a microelectromechanical system (MEMS). In one embodiment, a process for forming a pixelated organic LED device is provided.

Fig. 1 shows a cross-section of an OLED pixel. As shown, a substrate 101 is provided. The substrate provides support for the LED pixel. A functional stack 105 comprising of one or more organic functional layers 120 formed between conductive layers 110 and 150 is formed on the substrate, creating the LED pixel. The

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conductive layer 110 serves as an anode and the  
conductive layer 150 serves as a cathode.

A plurality of LED pixels can be arranged on the  
substrate to form an FPD. The FPD is used in various  
5 consumer electronic products, including cellular phones,  
cellular smart phones, personal organizers, pagers,  
advertising panel, touch screen displays,  
teleconferencing equipment, multimedia equipment,  
virtual reality products, and display kiosks.

10 Figs. 2-5 show a process for patterning a device  
layer on a substrate in the fabrication of a device. In  
one embodiment, the device fabricated comprises a  
pixelated OLED device. Forming other types of devices  
such as electrical and/or mechanical devices, including  
15 sensor arrays, is also useful.

Referring to Fig. 2, a substrate 201 is provided on  
which the active components of the device are formed.  
The substrate comprises a plastic or a polymeric  
material. In one embodiment, the substrate comprises a  
20 flexible substrate, such as poly(ethylene terephthalate)  
(PET) or polyester for forming flexible devices. The  
substrate can comprise a transparent substrate to serve  
as, for example, a display surface for an OLED display.  
The use of a flexible transparent substrate for forming

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a flexible display is also useful. Various types of plastic substrates, such as PET, poly(butylene terephthalate) (PBT), poly(ethylene naphthalate) (PEN), Polycarbonate (PC), polyimides (PI), polysulfones (PSO),  
5 and poly(*p*-phenylene ether sulfone) (PES) are useful. Other substrates comprising polyethylene (PE), polypropylene (PP), poly(vinyl chloride) (PVC), polystyrene (PS) and poly(methyl methacrylate) (PMMA), can also be used.

10 In one embodiment, the substrate should be thin to result in a thin device while providing sufficient mechanical integrity during the fabrication process to support the active components. Preferably, the substrate should be as thin as possible while providing  
15 sufficient mechanical integrity during the fabrication process. The substrate thickness is, for example, about 20 - 200  $\mu\text{m}$ . Thicker substrates are also useful. For example, thicker substrate, can be used where device thickness or flexibility is not an issue.

20 A device layer 210 is formed on the substrate. The device layer comprises, for example, a conductive layer. Other types of device layers, such as dielectrics or semiconductors, are also useful. In one embodiment the device layer comprises a transparent



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conductive layer that serves as an electrode for an LED device. The transparent conductive layer comprises an indium-tin-oxide (ITO). ITO is useful in forming the transparent anode of the LED device. Other transparent  
5 conductive layers, including zinc-oxide or indium-zinc-oxide are also useful. Various techniques, such as sputtering, physical vapor deposition (PVD), chemical vapor deposition (CVD) or plasma enhanced CVD (PECVD) can be employed to form the device layer. The device  
10 layer is deposited on the substrate to a thickness of about, for example, 100 nm. The thickness, of course, can vary depending on design requirements.

A stamp 280 comprising a desired pattern on a surface 231 is provided. The pattern is define by  
15 protrusions 285 on surface 231. The stamp is made of a hard material such as steel, silicon, or ceramic. Other materials that are sufficiently hard can also be used to form the stamp.

In one embodiment, the pattern is deeper than the  
20 thickness of the device layer. This ensures proper patterning of the device layer. However, the height of the protrusions should be less than that which would compromise the support function of the substrate. In one embodiment, the height of the protrusions is at

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least about 2 - 10 times the thickness of the device layer, preferably 5 - 10 times the thickness of the device layer. For example, the height of the protrusions is about 0.5 - 1  $\mu\text{m}$  for a 100  $\mu\text{m}$  thick device layer. The height of the protrusions can be optimized according to the mechanical properties and thickness of the substrate.

Referring to Fig. 3, a load is applied on the stamp 280, forcing the stamp against the substrate 201. This causes the pattern on the stamp to be transferred to the substrate. The load applied on the stamp is sufficient to prevent the device layer 210 from cracking in the active or non-patterned areas as it is patterned. In one embodiment, the net pressure of the load is about 200 - 400 MPa for a typical polymer substrate. In general, the required net pressure should exceed about 1.1 times the yield strength of the substrate material.

Referring to Fig. 4, the stamp is lifted from the substrate. As shown, the pattern on the stamp is transferred onto the device layer. In one embodiment, the device layer is patterned to form electrode strips on the substrate. Conventional processing continues to form the device.

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In one embodiment, the process continues to fabricate OLED pixels of an OLED device. Fabrication of OLED pixels is described in, for example, United States Patent 4,720,432 and Burroughes et. al, Nature 347 (1990) 539, which are herein incorporated by reference for all purposes. This includes, for example, depositing one or more organic functional layers, such as conjugated polymer or  $Alq_3$ , on the electrode. Other types of organic layers can also be useful. Preferably, a plurality of functional layers is formed on the electrode. Second electrode strips comprising metal such as aluminum or other conductive material are formed over the functional layer. The second electrode strips are typically orthogonal to the bottom electrode strips. Providing second electrode strips that are diagonal to the bottom electrode strips is also useful. The intersections of the top and bottom electrode strips form OLED pixels. Various techniques can be used to form the electrode strips. For example, the second electrode strips can be formed by selective deposition techniques. Alternatively, the electrode strip can be formed by selectively patterning a top electrode layer to form the strips.

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In an alternative embodiment, the pattern on the stamp can be formed to include a plurality of devices for parallel processing, thereby decreasing process time per device. The stamp pattern can be formed by a  
5 variety of techniques. Such techniques include, for example, grinding or photolithographic and etch processes.

Fig. 5 shows another embodiment of the invention. As shown, a stamp comprising a drum 580 with the desired  
10 pattern 585 thereon is provided. The drum stamp is used in reel-to-reel processing. A long flexible substrate 501 with a device layer 510 formed thereon is provided. The substrate is translated through the drum while it is pressed under rotation, patterning the device layer. As  
15 shown, the substrate is translated in a direction from right to left and the drum stamp is rotated in the clockwise direction. Reversing the direction that the substrate is translated is also useful. Reel-to-reel processing enables parallel processing of devices.

20 While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to various embodiments, it will be recognized by those skilled in the art that modifications and changes may be made to the present invention without departing from the spirit and scope

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thereof. The scope of the invention should therefore be determined not with reference to the above description but with reference to the appended claims along with their full scope of equivalents.

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What is claimed is:

1. In the fabrication of a device, a method of patterning a device layer comprising:

providing a substrate comprising the device layer  
5 on its surface; and

patterning the device layer by pressing a stamp comprising a pattern against the substrate.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the device comprises  
10 an organic LED device.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the substrate comprises a polymeric substrate.

15 4. The method of claim 3 wherein the substrate comprises a flexible or ductile substrate.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the substrate comprises a transparent substrate.

20

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the device layer comprises a transparent conductive layer.

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7. The method of claim 6 wherein the transparent conductive layer comprises a conductive oxide.

8. The method of claim wherein 7 conductive oxide.  
5 comprises indium-tin-oxide.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the pattern is produced by protrusions on a surface of the stamp.

10 10. The method of claim 9 wherein patterning the device layer forms lower electrodes on the substrate.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the protrusions comprise a height greater than a thickness of the device  
15 layer.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the height of the protrusions is at least about 2 - 10 times greater than the thickness of the device layer.

20

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the stamp is pressed against the substrate surface under a load without causing the device layer to crack in non-patterned areas.

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14. The method of claim 13 wherein the load comprises a net pressure of greater than about 1.10 times a yield strength of the substrate.

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15. The method of claim 14 further comprises processing to form OLED pixels.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the processing to  
10 form OLED pixels comprises:

forming at least one organic functional layer on lower electrodes; and

forming upper electrodes on the organic functional layer, wherein OLED pixels are formed where upper and  
15 lower electrodes sandwich the organic functional layer.

17. The method of claim 3 wherein the substrate comprises a transparent substrate.

20 18. The method of claim 17 wherein the device layer comprises a transparent conductive layer.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the pattern is produced by protrusions on a surface of the stamp.



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20. The method of claim 19 wherein patterning the device layer forms lower electrodes on the substrate.

5 21. The method of claim 20 wherein the protrusions comprise a height greater than a thickness of the device layer.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein the stamp is pressed  
10 against the substrate surface under a load without causing the device layer to crack in non-patterned areas.

23. The method of claim 22 further comprises processing  
15 to form OLED pixels.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein the processing to form OLED pixels comprises:

forming at least one organic functional layer on  
20 lower electrodes; and

forming upper electrodes on the organic functional layer, wherein OLED pixels are formed where upper and lower electrodes sandwich the organic functional layer.

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25. The method of claim 3 wherein the device layer comprises a conductive layer.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein the pattern is  
5 produced by protrusions on a surface of the stamp.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein patterning the device layer forms lower electrodes on the substrate.

10 28. The method of claim 27 wherein the protrusions comprise a height greater than a thickness of the device layer.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein the stamp is pressed  
15 against the substrate surface under a load without causing the device layer to crack in non-patterned areas.

30. The method of claim 29 further comprises processing  
20 to form OLED pixels.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein the processing to form OLED pixels comprises:

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forming at least one organic functional layer on lower electrodes; and

forming upper electrodes on the organic functional layer, wherein OLED pixels are formed where upper and  
5 lower electrodes sandwich the organic functional layer.

32. The method of claim 2 wherein the substrate comprises a material selected from the group consisting of polyester, poly(ethylene terephthalate),  
10 poly(butylene terephthalate), poly(enthylene naphthalate), polyethylenesterephthalate, polycarbonate, polyimides, polysulfones, poly(p-phenylene ether sulfone), polyethylene, polypropylene, poly(vinyl chloride), polystyrene, and poly(methyl  
15 methyleacrylate).

33. The method of claim 32 wherein the device layer comprises a conductive layer.

20

34. The method of claim 33 wherein the pattern is produced by protrusions on a surface of the stamp, the pattern is used to form lower electrodes on the substrate.

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35. The method of claim 34 wherein the protrusions comprise a height greater than a thickness of the device layer to pattern the device layer.

5 36. The method of claim 35 wherein the stamp is pressed against the substrate surface under a load without causing the device layer to crack in non-patterned areas.

10 37. The method of claim 36 further comprises processing to form OLED pixels comprising:

forming at least one organic functional layer on lower electrodes; and

forming upper electrodes on the organic functional  
15 layer, wherein OLED pixels are formed where upper and lower electrodes sandwich the organic functional layer.

38. The method of claim 1 wherein the substrate comprises a polymeric substrate.

20

39. The method of claim 38 wherein the pattern is produced by protrusions on a surface of the stamp.

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40. The method of claim 39 wherein the protrusions comprise a height greater than a thickness of the device layer.

5 41. The method of claim 40 wherein the height of the protrusions is at least about 5-10 times greater than the thickness of the device layer.

42. The method of claim 41 wherein the stamp is pressed  
10 against the substrate surface under a load without causing the device layer to crack in non-patterned areas.

43. The method of claim 42 wherein the load comprises a  
15 net pressure of greater than about 1.1 times a yield strength of the substrate.

44. The method of claim 43 further comprises processing to form the device.

20

45. The method of claim 44 wherein the device comprises a device selected from the group consisting of an electrical device, a mechanical device, a

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electromechanical device, and a microelectromechanical system.

46. The method of claim 40 wherein the stamp is pressed  
5 against the substrate surface under a load without causing the device layer to crack in non-patterned areas.

47. The method of claim 46 further comprises processing  
10 to form the device.

48. The method of claim 47 wherein the device comprises a device selected from the group consisting of an electrical device, a mechanical device, a  
15 electromechanical device, and a microelectromechanical system.

49. The method of claim 1 wherein the substrate comprises a material selected from the group consisting  
20 of polyester, poly(ethylene terephthalate), poly(butylene terephthalate), poly(enthylene naphthalate), polyethylenesterephthalate, polycarbonate, polyimides, polysulfones, poly(p-phenylene ether sulfone), polyethylene, polypropylene, poly(vinyl

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chloride), polystyrene, and poly(methyl methyleacrylate).

5 50. The method of claim 49 wherein the pattern is produced by protrusions on a surface of the stamp.

51. The method of claim 50 wherein the protrusions comprise a height greater than a thickness of the device  
10 layer to pattern the device layer.

52. The method of claim 51 wherein the stamp is pressed against the substrate surface under a load without causing the device layer to crack in non-patterned  
15 areas.

53. The method of claim 52 further comprises processing to form the device.

20 54. A method of patterning comprising:  
rotating a stamp comprising a drum with a pattern;  
and  
translating a substrate with a device layer thereon as the stamp is rotated to pattern the device.

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55. The method of claim 1 wherein the substrate comprises a polymeric substrate.

56. The method of claim 55 wherein the pattern is  
5 produced by protrusions on a surface of the stamp.

57. The method of claim 56 wherein the protrusions comprise a height greater than a thickness of the device layer to pattern the device layer.

10

58. The method of claim 57 wherein the stamp is pressed against the substrate surface under a load without causing the device layer to crack in non-patterned areas.

15

59. The method of claim 58 further comprises processing to form the device.

60. The method of claim 59 wherein the device comprises  
20 a device selected from the group consisting of an electrical device, a mechanical device, a electromechanical device, and a microelectromechanical system.



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61. The method of claim 59 wherein the device comprises  
an OLED device.

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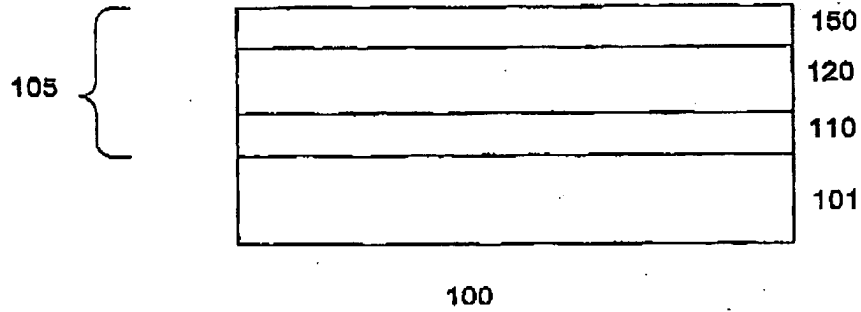


Fig. 1

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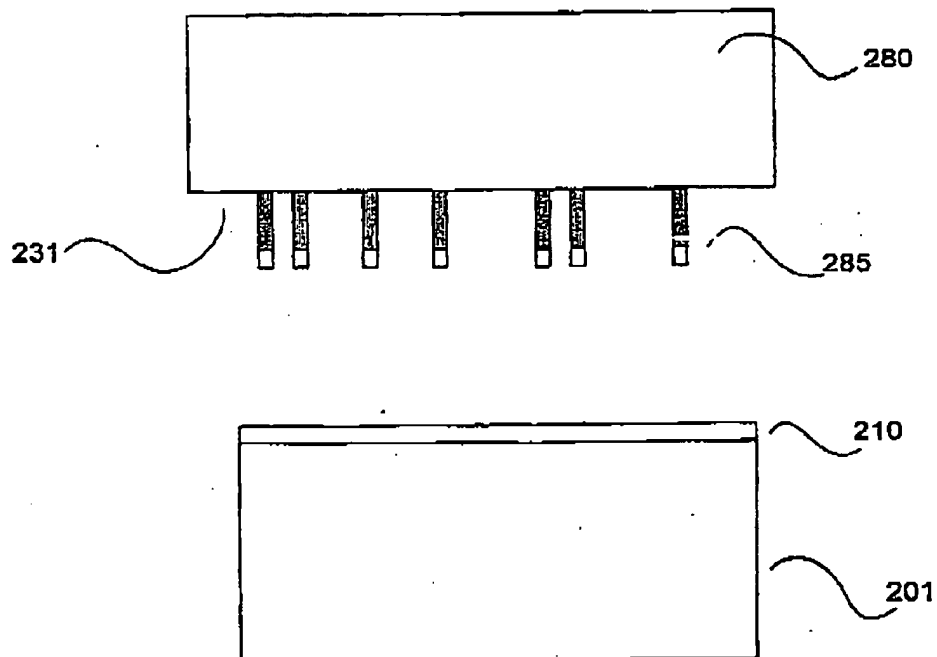


Fig. 2

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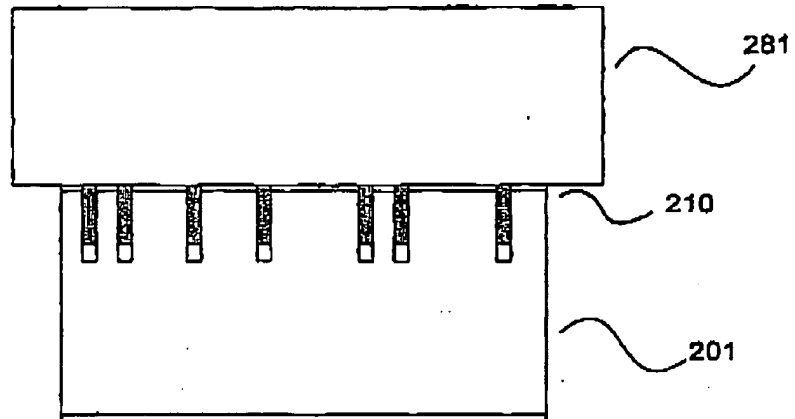


Fig. 3

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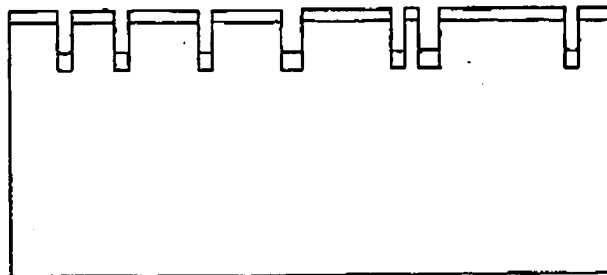


Fig. 4

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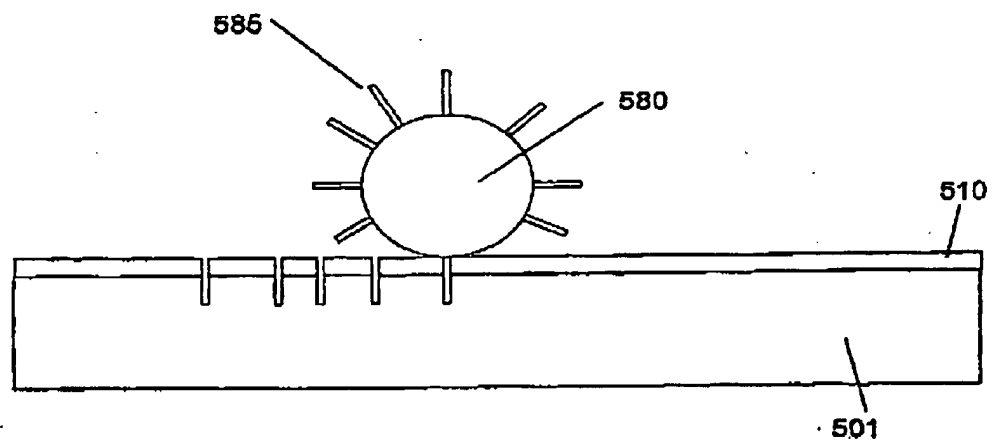


Fig. 5

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.  
PCT/SG 99/00074

## A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC<sup>7</sup>: H01L 21/027; 21/308; 21/311; 21/321

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC<sup>7</sup>: H01L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

WPI, PAJ, EPODOC

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X Y A	US5669303 A (MARACAS et al.) 23 September 1997 (23.09.97) abstract, fig.1,2,3,11; claim 1.	1 2,3 4-53; 55-61
Y A	GB 2332985 A (PIONEER) 07 July 1999 (07.07.99), abstract.	2,3 4-52; 55-61
X X	US 5259926 A (KUWABARA) 09 November 1993 (09.11.93) abstract, fig. 1-4, claims 1, 14-26.	1,54
A	WO 97/06012 A1 (IBMC) 20 February 1997 (20.02.97) abstract, fig. 1,2,3.	1, 54

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.☒ See patent family annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

09 May 2000 (09.05.00)

Date of mailing of the international search report

20 June 2000 (20.06.00)

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**INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT**

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/SG 99/00074

Patent document cited in search report			Publication date	Patent family member(s)			Publication date
US	A	5669303	23-09-1997	EP	A1	794016	10-09-1997
				JP	A2	9240125	16-09-1997
GB	A1	2332985	07-07-1999	GB	A0	9828870	17-02-1999
				JP	A2	11195491	21-07-1999
US	A	9259926	09-11-1993	JP	A2	5080530	02-04-1993
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				JP	T2	9511710	25-11-1997
				US	A	5817242	06-10-1998

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